

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Canceled)

2. (Currently amended) An ion elution unit that generates metal ions from electrodes when a drive circuit applies a voltage between the electrodes,

~~wherein metal ions eluted from the electrodes are either silver ions, copper ions, or zinc ions,~~

~~wherein the ion elution unit comprises~~ comprising:

a water feed valve for feeding water to the ion elution unit~~[[,]]; and~~

a control unit configured to control the drive circuit to reverse polarities of the electrodes cyclically by alternating a voltage application period with a voltage application halt period when the water feed valve is feeding water to the ion elution unit,

wherein the electrodes are disposed along water current fed, and

wherein metal ion eluted from the electrodes are either silver ions, copper ions. or zinc ions

~~wherein, when the water feed valve is feeding water to the ion elution unit, the drive circuit reverses polarities of the electrodes cyclically by alternating a voltage application period with a voltage application halt period.~~

3. (Canceled)

4. (Previously presented) The ion elution unit according to claim 2, wherein the drive circuit varies the voltage applied to the electrodes such that a constant current flows between the electrodes.

5. (Previously presented) The ion elution unit according to claim 2, further comprising:
a current detection unit for detecting current flowing between the electrodes; and

a controller for controlling the entire ion elution unit,
wherein the controller controls the drive circuit based on the current flowing between the electrodes detected by the current detection unit, and operation of the current detection unit is checked before the voltage starts to be applied to the electrodes.

6. (Previously presented) The ion elution unit according to claim 2, further comprising:
a current detection unit for detecting current flowing between the electrodes; and
a controller for controlling the entire ion elution unit;
wherein the controller controls the drive circuit based on the current flowing between the electrodes detected by the current detection unit, and detection operation of the current detection unit is started a predetermined period of time after the voltage starts to be applied to the electrodes.

7. (Previously presented) The ion elution unit according to claim 2, further comprising:
a current detection unit for detecting current flowing between the electrodes;
a warning indicator; and
a controller for controlling the entire ion elution unit,
wherein the controller controls the drive circuit based on the current flowing between the electrodes detected by the current detection unit, and, when the current detection unit detects abnormal current, the warning indicator issues a warning to notify a user of abnormality.

8. (Previously presented) The ion elution unit according to claim 7, wherein even if the current detection unit detects abnormal current, so long as normal current has been detected at least once during an ion elution process, the controller does not give the warning indicator an instruction that makes the warning indicator issue the warning to notify the user of the abnormality.

9. (Previously presented) The ion elution unit according to claim 2, further comprising:
a current detection unit for detecting current flowing between the electrodes; and

a controller for controlling the entire ion elution unit,
wherein the controller controls the drive circuit based on the current flowing between the electrodes detected by the current detection unit, and, when the current detection unit detects that the current flowing between the electrodes is equal to or less than a predetermined level, the controller controls the drive circuit to adjust the length of the voltage application period and/or voltage application halt period with respect to the electrodes, or the length of the ion elution period.

10. (Previously presented) An appliance that incorporates the ion elution unit as set forth in claim 2 and uses water mixed with metal ions generated by the ion elution unit.

11. (Previously presented) The appliance according to claim 10, further comprising:
a controller for controlling the entire appliance,
wherein the controller controls the drive circuit to make the drive circuit adjust the ion elution period according to the amount of water used.

12. (Previously presented) The appliance according to claim 10, further comprising:
a controller for controlling the entire appliance,
wherein the controller controls the drive circuit to make the drive circuit adjust the length of the voltage application period and/or voltage application halt period with respect to the electrodes according to the amount of water used or according to the ion elution period.

13. (Previously presented) The appliance according to claim 10, further comprising:
a flow rate detection unit for detecting the volume of water flowing in the ion elution unit, and
a controller for controlling the entire appliance,
wherein the controller controls the drive circuit based on a result of detection by the flow rate detection unit to make the drive circuit adjust the length of the voltage application period and/or voltage application halt period with respect to the electrodes, or the ion elution period.

14. (Previously presented) An appliance that incorporates the ion elution unit as set forth in claim 5, wherein when the current detection unit detects abnormal current, the controller executes specified countermeasures.

15. (Original) The appliance according to claim 14, wherein the specified countermeasure is a temporary stop of the appliance operation.

16. (Previously presented) An appliance that incorporates the ion elution unit as set forth in claim 5, wherein, when the current detection unit detects that the current flowing between the electrodes is equal to or less than a predetermined level, the controller controls the water feed valve to make the water feed valve reduce the volume of water flow fed to the ion elution unit and controls the drive circuit to make the drive circuit extend the ion elution period.

17. (Original) The appliance according to claim 10, wherein the appliance is a washer.

18. (Original) The appliance according to claim 11, wherein the appliance is a washer.

19. (Original) The appliance according to claim 12, wherein the appliance is a washer.

20. (Original) The appliance according to claim 13, wherein the appliance is a washer.

21. (Original) The appliance according to claim 14, wherein the appliance is a washer.

22. (Original) The appliance according to claim 15, wherein the appliance is a washer.

23. (Original) The appliance according to claim 16, wherein the appliance is a washer.

24. (Currently amended) An ion elution unit that generates silver ions by applying a voltage between electrodes disposed in a water feed passage, comprising:

- a drive circuit for applying the voltage between the electrodes; ~~and~~
- a water feed valve for feeding water to the ion elution unit[[,]]; ~~and~~
- a control unit configured to control the drive circuit to reverse polarities of the electrodes cyclically by alternating a voltage application period with a voltage application halt period when the water feed valve is feeding water to the ion elution unit,

wherein the electrodes are disposed along water current fed, ~~and~~

~~wherein, when the water feed valve is feeding water to the ion elution unit, the drive circuit reverses polarities of the electrodes cyclically by alternating a voltage application period with a voltage application halt period.~~